



Clarendon's Como design includes a separate study space with access to good natural light.

# WORKING WITH OFFICE POLITICS

The right study equipment can help ease the kids into a back-to-school routine, writes **Chelsea Clark**

**T**hat sigh of relief you can hear echoing across the state is coming from parents everywhere thanks to the return of the school year.

The long summer break is over and kids finally have something to get them out of bed in the mornings. Their collective cries of “I’m bored” will soon be replaced with “I wish it was still the holidays” as the reality and routine of the start of the first term of 2015 sets in.

Many parents too are getting back into the habit of another year with work in full swing and the prospect of another public holiday not on the agenda for a few months.

Making the transition back to routine can be a struggle but having an inspiring and dedicated space at home for the kids to get stuck into their homework and parents to catch up on emails can make the shift a little easier on everyone.

Whether you share a home office, have the kids’ desks set up in their bedrooms or use a study nook for the home computer, experts agree there are certain recommendations for getting the most from your space and ensuring it’s set up properly for the whole family.

## THE RIGHT STUFF

Sharing a home study with the kids is a great space-saving idea — technology can be kept in one spot and any mess can be conveniently closed off from the rest of the household.

But physiotherapist Jennifer Dodge from The Office Athlete says simply letting the kids sit in the home office chair to do their homework could cause problems.

“The space you make for kids should be created to consider their size,” she says.

If space allows, Jennifer suggests size-suitable furniture should be included for kids.

“Investing in a smaller chair and desk is



Study spaces for adults and kids, like this set-up by Ikea, are a good use of space.

ideal for preventing unnecessary posture changes when adapting to other furniture when working.

“If you have a higher desk, try designating a space for a standing workstation for your kids. This is a fantastic way for children to mix up their workload between sitting and standing and will reduce overall neck strain and increasing muscle use in their lower limbs.”

Natural light is another home study must-have to avoid unnecessary eye strain for both parents and kids.

Officeworks back-to-school spokesperson Justine Davies says a good desk lamp is essential. She also recommends a study space

that is free from distractions such as television, magazines and internet access.

## SLEEP SEPARATION

Controlling distractions is a relatively simple task when children are young and using a shared study space but if you have a teenager it can be more difficult — especially if their work space is in their bedroom.

For this reason, parenting expert Michael Grose recommends a separate study area for older teens away from the bedroom.

“Space carries memory,” he says. “Bedrooms are for sleeping, not working and a lot of kids have trouble separating the two,” he says. ➔

## HEALTHY HOMEWORK HABITS

“Children definitely need to practise good ergonomics and this includes regular breaks when sitting at the computer,” says Jennifer Dodge from The Office Athlete.

“Setting a timer for every 30 minutes to get up, have a stretch and walk around will do wonders for their energy and concentration levels, not to mention their neck and shoulders.”

Try these tips for ensuring your home office space is set up properly.

- Make sure your eye level rests naturally at the top third of the computer screen by adjusting it to avoid looking up at the screen.
  - If laptops are your preferred choice, make sure you have a laptop stand and a separate keyboard for prolonged use.
  - The office chair needs to support the lumbar spine and shoulders with a recline of about 110 degrees.
  - Feet should be in contact with the floor or on a foot rest and the desk should be able to support forearms in a relaxed manner.
  - Encourage regular mini stretches when sitting and in between computer breaks. These include rolling your shoulders, gentle neck stretches, calf raises when sitting and forearm stretches.
- More** The Office Athlete, [theofficeathlete.com.au](http://theofficeathlete.com.au)